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Buenos Aires

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March 13, 1979

OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

Claus W. Ruser, Esquire
Director, East Coast Affairs
(ARA/ECA)
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): NR

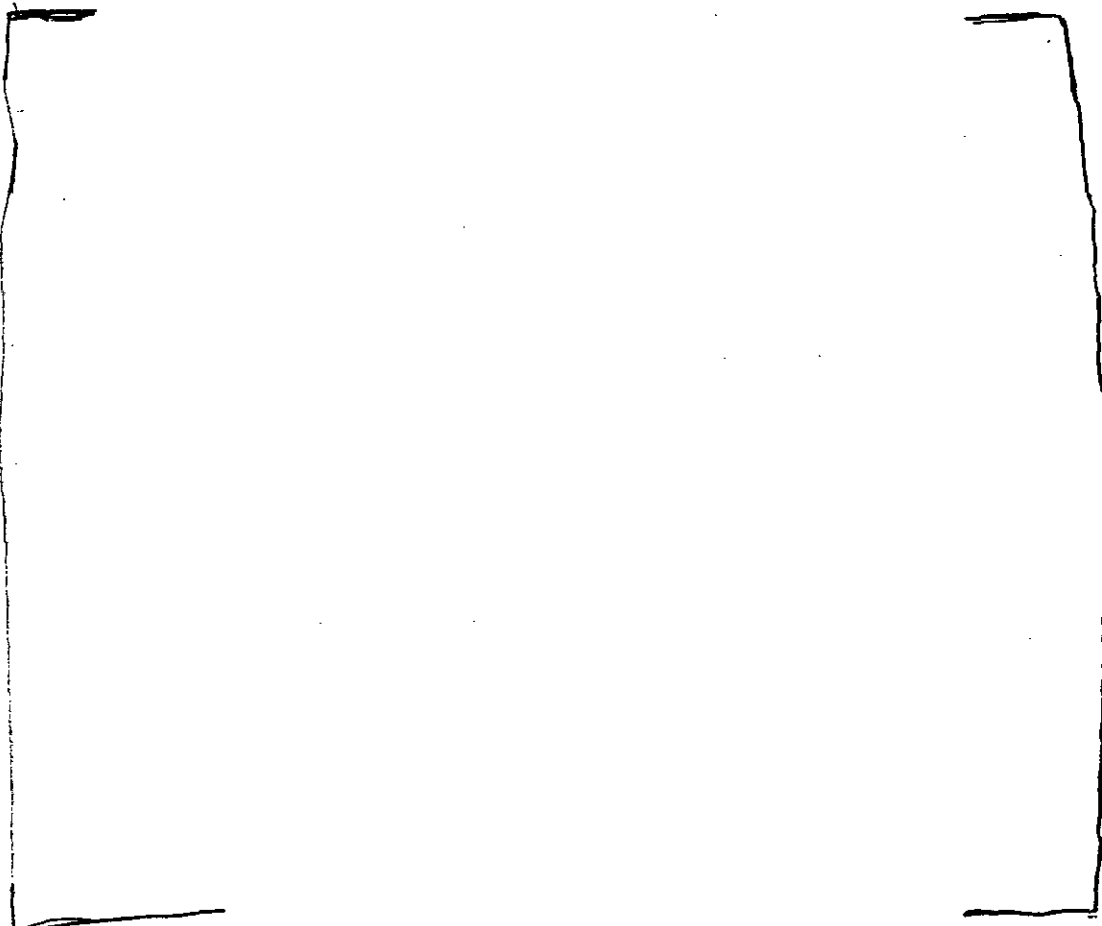
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Dear Claus:

With further reference to your letter to the Ambassador
of March 2:



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Criminal Terrorism

Your letter expressed concern about terrorist activities such as machine gunning of Admiral Massera's house and the killing of Ms. Holmberg. You saw them as very disturbing signs. We agree they are far from heartening but would add that they have traditionally been common in Argentina, at least for the past thirty years. Yvonne Thayer recently did a cable on criminal abductions which have been a favorite off-duty activity of the Argentine police for many years. You will also recall that few major labor leaders have died in bed and bombing a political opponent's house (or that of his subordinates) is commonplace. There are some rules to this game but we gringos never understand them. For some reason it was understandable to Argentines that Ricardo Yofre's house and office were bombed three times while he worked in the Palace. The murder of Ms. Holmberg, however, was apparently well beyond what is considered permissible. I have not heard anyone express even the mildest concern about the machine gunning of Massera's house since the day it occurred. It is hard to say what all this adds up to beyond the fact that Argentina has been an extremely violent country for many years. I do not believe you should leap to conclusions about political developments merely because of a high level of violence, much of which may be criminal.

IAHRC Visit

We are pleased that Ambassador Vaky has agreed to careful, informal discussions with the IAHRC. This visit assumes a constantly increasing importance in Argentina and for our policy objectives. One thought which did not survive clearly in the final draft of Buenos Aires 850 was that the Commission should endeavor to go beyond simple condemnation of Argentina's misdeeds and try to reach an agreement with the GOA on some precise remedial steps. I believe that if the criticism of the GOA is not too harsh, the Commission report could have a major positive impact by engaging the

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Argentines in dialogue or commitments on steps which the Argentines will take to restore observance of human rights. If Argentina is simply treated as a pariah, the internal political reaction could be unfavorable, both for Videla/Viola and for the improvement of security practices.

Brazilian Squatters on Argentine Border

Porto Alegre's 0073 transmitted a newspaper story to the effect that Argentine police were mistreating Brazilian squatters in the Province of Misiones. The Political Section will try to follow up on that report to see how much of it is factual. We know that the Argentines are very sensitive to the "moving frontier" with Brazil in that area, and periodically chase out squatters and try to carry out colonization programs for Argentines. The report sounded a bit dramatic but I have no doubts at all that the Argentine authorities can be quite unpleasant to squatters when they are acting in defense of the Patria.

IV Grants to VIPs

At our IV meeting last Friday it was mentioned that the Minister of Justice was giving signs that he wants an invitation to the U.S. to consult on penal reform. Since this fits in so closely with our goals and closely follows what the Minister told the Ambassador about cleaning up the prisons it looks like a natural. We assume that in order to carry off such a visit properly the Minister would have to be assured of a meeting with the Attorney General or someone of similar status. If this firms up we will be cabling our proposal shortly. It also looks as if we may be able to send a promising member of the Supreme Court as an IV grantee.

Reimbursable Development Programs

State 060639 told us that Agriculture plans to undertake research and agricultural management projects with the GOA which will be funded under Section 661 of the FAA. We have no objections to these activities, rather they are to be encouraged. We do wonder if the use of the FAA

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authority has been fully thought through in the Department. This kind of project is exactly the type of activity we should try to expand here and it would be a great misfortune if the USG were to reverse itself and decide that Argentina does not qualify for reimbursable development programs since they fall under the FAA. Can you give us some reassurance that this project will not blow up in our faces?

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Chaplin

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